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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

It won’t be long before Spring is in full gear! It’s a great time of year; I’m looking forward to getting out of my winter doldrums. Time to get outside do some planting, get the yard in order, and just bask in the nice New England weather! A little barbecue, a swim in the pool, a few drinks on the patio late into the evening....

My editorializing for this week has moved from this primary location to the Gaming section. I’ll be back here next week with a progress report of what’s happening here at A-ONE, along with some new goodies!

Until next time...

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SAMS ’99 (Spring All Micro Show)

From: "Joe Connor" <joe@inactive.cix.co.uk>

Sharward Promotions is proud to celebrate its 10th anniversary organising this popular Computer and Electronics Show in association with Computer Shopper and Atari Computing magazines.

This twice annual Computer Fair attracts thousands of visitors and dozens of traders covering all aspects of computing. You’ll find stands dedicated to Computers, Accessories, Multimedia, Satellite, TV, Amateur Radio, Electronics, Bring and Buy with Atari and Sinclair villages.

Date: Sunday April 18th
Opening Times: 10am to 4pm
Venue: Bingley Hall, Staffordshire Showground, Stafford
Entrance Prices:
Adult: #3
Children under 14: 50p
Concessions (OAPs, RSGB members, Student Card, UB40): #2
Advance ticket sales: #2 plus SAE

Directions:
Stafford County Showground, Weston Road, Stafford
Off A518, Stafford - Uttoxeter Road, signposted from Junction 14 on M6
Bus Shuttle from Stafford Rail Station (this costs #1 each way)
User Groups welcome with discount stand prices available

For more information, or to book a stand:
Tel: 01473 212113
Fax: 01473 212114
http://www.sharward.co.uk/sproms.html
Email: services@sharward.co.uk

Sharward Promotions (SAMS ’99)
Westerfield Business Centre, Main Road, Westerfield, Ipswich, IP6 9AB
Apart from the dozens of general computer and electronic stands there will be plenty of dedicated Atari vendors. Here’s a partial and provisional line up so far:
* SysSols
* Titan (TBC)
* Electronic Cow
* ASP
* 16/32
* Portfolio Club
* CyberSTrider
* Falke Verlag (ST Computer)
* Console Centre
* Web.Wizard Matthew Bacon
* HBASIC boy wonder Paul Jones
* Maggie Team
* Atari Computing
* User groups
--
Regards
Joe
http://www.cix.co.uk/~inactive/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, it seems that our April Fools press release fooled one or two of you. Some of you took it harder than others, even to the point of thinking that we were making fun of someone’s bad situation. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I thought that this particular prank could help call attention to what’s going on (or what’s NOT going on, actually) at Hasbro.

Hasbro, as you know, bought the rights to just about everything that was Atari and set to work on developing the classic games that we’ve all come to know and love for PCs. The rest of their holdings, they forgot about. Or perhaps they were simply unsure of how to proceed. At any rate, they don’t seem to have plans to do anything with either the computer technology or the game machine know-how they’ve inherited.

As a result, there are folks out there who have spent a large portion of their time developing games for the Jaguar and now have no way to produce them. You see, in order to make the final product that you could pop into your Jaguar the coding needs to be encrypted. It can only be encrypted with the permission of the holder of the rights. And right now that’s Hasbro.

When we decided to plant an April Fools story and settled on our buying the rights to Jaguar encryption, I suggested calling attention to the problem by mentioning a game called "WarBall" produced by a company

called "After-Glo" (The company name was my idea, but not the name of the game).

We decided to stay with the premise, but to use different names since WarBall was too reminiscent of BattleSphere, and After-Glo was quite suggestive of 4Play. While we wanted to fool people, we didn't want to take a swipe at anyone for simply having the bad luck to try supporting us.

The queries and responses we received ranged from mild interest to wild jubilation to fierce anger. Most of those who had been fooled were good natured about it. Some were slightly embarrassed. Some were downright nasty and abusive. All I can say is that we'll take what comes from our little jest as we had hoped that others would take it... in stride.

Actually, I like the "After-Glo" name. Now where could I possibly use it??

Oh, before I forget, by the time you read this, you should be able to visit our fledgling web site at http://a1mag.atari.org

There really isn't much there at the moment, but we hope to constantly add and improve upon it. Let us know what you think.

Well, let's get on with the reason for this column: the news, hints, tips, and info available on the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Odd Skancke asks for help with his new Hades computer:

" Hi, all. I've just purchased a Hades 060 :-)) But, as I can't seem to use the resolutions that is provided with the Machine (bad monitor), I need a program that I can use to create my own resolutions. If anyone know if there exist a program that will let me design resolutions for the ET6000 gfx card on the Hades, please let me know!"

Jim Logan tells Odd:

"On your utility disc you should have a program called VMG_xxx.PRG where xxx stand s for your particular card/bus. When you run it you can then try different resolutions tailored to your particular monitor."

Martin "Nightowl" Byttebier tells Jim:

"Nope, there isn't one provided on the system disk. Only one for the ET4000 but not for the ET6000.

The driver for the ET6000 was made by Fredi Ashwanden and not by Computerinsel.

I've asked Fredi several times if he could send me the appropiate VMG but he never answered my mails."

"Doctor Clu" posts:

"We've seen the occasional message "Are there any other users..."

This tells me that we still long for user groups, and since I am having such a blast (and since Atari is such a cool platform) I would like to fill in the blanks here in the Americas!

In the United States, I find it ironic that all the fandom tends towards the edges of the country. You have two user groups (AUNT, HACE) in Texas, the Pacesetter in Florida, Old Hackers in New York (?) and then the next nearest thing are the clubs in Canada.

What? I didn't list your group? Well, let's fix that!

I want to blanket the United States with Atari fandom. I know the users are out there. Thousands of Atari users, many not connected to the internet.. but they're out there.

So, the thing to do is start a list. From this list we can find people who live near us, and start clubs and user groups.

In 1999? Can you think of a better time?

And from this list we can make a map and show all the locations of user groups across the United States.

TO HELP WITH THIS.. ALL WE NEED IS:

YOUR NAME
LOCATION (City, State)
E-MAIL ADDRESS
COMPUTER TYPE   (optional)

As soon as I get 20 names, I will post the URL for the MEGA USER LISTING, so send your info today help get this started. Who knows, someone else might be waiting to start a group up near you!"

Rene de Bie tells the Doctor:

"I like the Idea but I think you should make a list of all active users in the world.

The people just have to subscribe to get on or off the list."

Greg Evans asks:

"Am I the only who uses Telnet regularly and would like to be able to upload and download while connected? I do it all the time with CommNet on my PC, but I have yet to find an Atari equivalent. I believe Peter has refused to update Telstar with this capability. I hate having disconnect from my Falcon, reconnect with my PC just to download a file while using Telnet."

Derryck Croker tells Greg:

"I believe that Teli (an IConnect client, needs MagiC and the IConnect stack) has this capability - http://www.camelot.de/~zulu"

Krzysztof Maj tells Greg to...

"Try ftp. You can do it with NEWSie - it's the simplest way. The another

solution is GAPFTP.TTP by Gary Priest. It features very powerful scripting capabilities, that allow totally automated uploading/downloading of files."

Louis Holleman posts:

"I've used this rainy second Easter day to do some maintenance again on my system. Took the TT completely apart, removed heaps of dust etc and while doing so I noticed several items that ask for explanation.

So this one's for the TT (technical) experts:

1. Just in front of the printer port, there are 3 connectors on the mainboard, a 4-pin J602, a 10-pin J606 (?) and another 10-pin J902. I gather J606 and 902 are the serial port connectors. Mine have been removed. In fact I do need them operational again because of future expansions. Are there connectors ready available? What is the J602 for?

2. Just left of the terminator sockets is another connector, J102. What is this one for?

3. The speaker is hooked to J803, a 3-pin connector, but only 2 pins are connected. You can hook it to the upper two pins, or the lower two ones. Anyone knows details?

4. Below the lower left corner of the ST-RAM board are 3 jumper sockets, W603 (here set on the lower position), W601 (here set on the lower position), and W602 (here set on the upper position) You guessed it, what are these for?

5. Finally, the J203 or dipswitch. I've got nr. 7 "ON", the rest is "Off". What are the various numbers doing in fact? I gathered one is for DD/HD floppy drives, but I don't know which one and I forgot about the others.

BTW: contrary to what I've said before, this one's got a Motorola 68030 inside, not an Intel one (I've got a friend with an Intel-made 68030 in his TT). Meanwhile the system is up and running again."

Lonny Pursell tells Louis:

"J203 or dipswitch... One of them controls the _SND cookie value. I know this cause when I first bought my TT all DMA sound software told me I had no such hardware much to my surprise. The dealer told me to lift the HD bay and flip a dip switch to correct it which it indeed did. I forget which one it was, that was several years ago."

Jeff Mitchell posts:

"OKay, I'm flamebait for this one <smile>

What's the most convenient OS to run on an ST? I'm not into music, if that matters. I was an old time Atari man from way back, with a many-year hiatus.. I used Mint way back when it began, before it was really useful. It would appear to be a big contender these days..

What OS choices are there? MagiC? Geneva? MultiTOS? Mint? (Is multitos just mint?) OS9? (always cool, but nowhere to find it now, for the ST) Anything others?

Geneva seems not too bad, and reasonably inexpensive. Decent package if bundles with Neodesk4... but is that too much RAM consumed on a 2mb ST? What about the others? Opinions? Comparisons? Is there a FAQ?"

John Whalley tells Jeff:

"You do realize you've just opened the gates of hell, don't you? <grin>

Before anyone starts blowing fuses, what follows is all in my humble opinion...

The most common MIDI apps (Cubase and Notator) really don't get on with the newer OSs. I think most people would boot plain TOS for those apps rather than struggling.

MiNT is now very usable, but you need add-on software to make it really usable for normal Atari apps (see below).

To get the really obscure out of the way, there was a brief thread here a short while back which mentioned esoteric such as OS9 and SMS2 - do a search on Dejanews for it to find out more.

I'm assuming that you have a hard drive: if not, I'd say you were better spending money on that initially as you'll miss most of the benefits of an OS upgrade without it. That said, if you have TOS 1.0 you will probably have problems with a hard drive and 1.2 isn't much better by all accounts unless you have patches installed. In which case upgrading the OS becomes more urgent.

For general use things boil down to two main divisions:

a) Single tasking

TOS: if you have a reasonable version (ie not 1.0 or 1.2), you could do worse with limited resources memory-wise. If you have 2 megs, adding in a replacement desktop would be a good idea - I'd recommend Teradesk, YMMV. TOS 2.06 and later has a reasonable desktop (Newdesk) anyway.

b) Multitasking

Firstly, I'd hesitate to recommend multitasking in less than 4 megs, not because it won't work, but because you'll have so little memory left for apps once the OS is loaded that it isn't worth it. It depends what you want to do: you might get away with one main app and a couple of utilities, but anything more ambitious could be a squeeze. It could be more useful for net access, where some of the apps such as POPwatch and NEWSwatch are quite small and it's handy to run them in parallel.

As a guide: on my 4 meg STE with MagiC5, NVDI4, STguide and COPS loaded as accs, I have just over 2 megs left for apps once booted. I'm sure it could be increased by reducing the size of NVDI's caches etc, but you can see why I think you might be squeezed in 2 meg.

That said, here are the options:

1. Geneva/TOS

This is an oddity in that it is only co-operative multitasking, but you can run it over MiNT to get full pre-emptive multitasking. Under

co-operative, a program can hog the processor, stopping background processes from running. This may be a problem for some people, not for others. Geneva/TOS is more suited to task switching (ie running more than one program and switching between them where it doesn't matter if background processes seize up), though I'm going on hearsay here as I haven't used it. It certainly has its fans, and has a reputation for being very compatible.

2. MagiC

I'll declare a bias here: this is my OS of choice, and particularly suited to STs as it is quite frugal with RAM if you use the supplied Magxdesk desktop, and it replaces the whole of TOS (TOS effectively just acts as an OS loader at bootup). It also has the advantage of accelerating STs (compared to TOS) when running just one program. It lacks some MiNT features which upsets some people, but generally these things are rather esoteric and for *most* purposes you won't miss them. Compatibility isn't bad but there are some programs it won't get on with and others where it's on the edge. Most recent apps will be fine. I hasten to add that this is the case with most replacement OSs - older programs were not designed to be multitasking friendly and are always going to be problematic.

3. MiNT with replacement AES

MiNT on its own won't multitask more than one GEM application. It doesn't replace all of TOS, so without a multitasking AES it uses the old TOS GEM and that's limited to single tasking. It will, however run lots of text apps and background processes so this kind of setup has its uses.

It also has a Unix mode, where you are effectively running a Unix system with Atari compatibility: this lets you run all sorts of ported Unix net stuff, for example. There are various distributions, such as the TAF package and KGMD (both a bit out of date, I gather), including some semi-commercial packages such as MiNT98.

To run multiple GEM apps, you need a multitasking AES. Here are the choices:

i) MultiTOS (AES 4.0). This was commercial from Atari, and is slow and buggy.

ii) AES 4.1. This was Atari's follow-up to MultiTOS which was never finished/released. It's faster, but has a whole load of bugs of its own. Technically this is unreleased commercial software, but you can find it on the net.

iii) Geneva. Geneva/MiNT isn't supposed to be too stable, but some people have found it works to their liking.

iv) N.AES. This is the finished commercial AES4.1 (unless I've misunderstood), and is available from Germany. Comes with the Thing desktop and has a very good reputation. The one to go for in the MiNT world, by all accounts.

v) Freeware AESs: oAESis and XaAES. Neither of these is finished or really usable, and both seem to have died as projects - curiosities, really.

I don't know how much RAM Geneva/Neodesk would take, so I'd suggest

MagiC if you want to go in this direction and can afford it, though add in NVDI (which many newer apps will need irrespective of OS) and you'll be pushed for RAM. You can try out MiNT for free, though I suspect you'll find you use too much RAM."

Jon Rasmussen asks:

"Can anyone tell me if there is a program that enables more screen space on my ATARI STe 520."

Nicholas Bales tells Jon:

"There is a program called MonSTEr that allows you to extend resolutions by scrolling around the normal screen. For example, you can have a 640x400 desktop in 16 colours, but you have to scroll around a 320x200 "window" with the mouse. It can be useful, but headache guaranteed. You should find it on most FTP sites in the "Ste" directory."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Songbird to Release 'SFX'!
April Fools Feedback/Perspective!
"Populous: The Beginning"
Baseball Games Galore!
And much more!

->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!

This past weekend, Atari Online News, Etc. (A-ONE) included a press release in our Gaming section, entitled "Newly Formed Publisher Acquires 64-Bit Jaguar Publishing Rights From Hasbro." To-date, the story has generated a lot of message activity on various online sources, as well as much e-mail. That was to be expected.

For those of us at A-ONE, and a select few outside of the magazine, the story has been incredible...and quite imaginary. Yes, it was an April Fools article. It should have been quite obvious (and I'll provide the "clues" below) if you read the issue, especially the press release itself. And, for the most part, the response that we got regarding the article was along the lines of 'damn you, you almost had me!' Of course, there were others that cursed us for our alleged cruelty to the Jaguar faithful. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Like you, we are, and have been for many years, Atari enthusiasts. We were waiting impatiently like everyone else for the Jaguar to be released.

We waited with anticipation for news of each and every new game for our machines. We waited, and reported, every bit of news pertaining to developer reports and word of a potentially new game. We celebrated, and we suffered the letdowns just like everyone else - perhaps longer than many. And we're still here, covering news of anything related to an Atari product, including the Jaguar.

EVERYBODY loves a good joke. And April Fools jokes are no different. It's the day when every prankster in the world comes out of the woodwork. What people especially enjoy is when the joke is on _someone else_; when you can stand/sit there and laugh at someone else's expense. The most common response, along with the chuckles, is "YOU fell for it!" What many people do not necessarily enjoy is when they're the ones that "got got"! Many fell for it, some were not sure, and some knew right away. That's the way it usually works. For most, we gotcha!

Was this a cruel mean-spirited joke? No. There was no animosity or ill-intended feeling behind it. Nor were there any personal attacks, as one humorless individual reacted. It was an April Fools article which came about fairly quickly.

I've been writing April Fools articles, either singularly, or with help since my days with my usergroup newsletter in the late 80's. I don't do one every year because the jokes would be expected and fail. When Joe and I started A-ONE in March, I mentioned that we might want to consider doing an April Fools issue, but we never mentioned it again until the beginning of last week, in the weekly chat-conference regularly held in the Atari Advantage Forum at Delphi. We mentioned a bunch of possible scenarios, some bizarre and some plausible. Before I left, I mentioned to those in attendance that I'd work on something for that week's issue. By the next day (Wednesday), I had a couple of potential ideas.

Since we're an Atari-oriented magazine, it had to relate to something we would normally cover. This meant something that was a current topic or issue. It would also have to be something Atari-related. I've been aware of the "situation" with regard to Hasbro's apparent disinterest in getting involved with encrypting Jaguar software. Naturally, Battlesphere is the subject of the day since it's ready to go.

We've all wondered what we would do if we owned Atari when it was floundering. The same imagination was felt during the JTS debacle. And now we're faced with Hasbro's inaction. We had our April Fools article. We made our imagination come true for a couple of days! As individuals, I felt we couldn't pull off "buying the rights" to the Jaguar. But as A-ONE, it added credibility. So now, we buy the rights to produce Jaguar games; we have the ability to encrypt other's games. We can now get "Warniverse" out on the market and into the hands of the anxiously new game-deprived public. Perfect.

Why did this April Fools article work so well? Because people were caught up in the possibilities rather that what the article said. And the "news" spread in bits and pieces rather in its total state. You made the conclusions before you finished the article. Don't get me wrong; you reacted as most of us would - myself included!

Once in awhile, there's an innocent bystander to a joke. Unintentional, but a "victim" nonetheless. Prop a bucket of water on a door that's ajar will sometimes splash onto more than the intended victim. Yes, it's usually funny, but you usually feel badly about the one who happened to be standing too close. Our "bucket of water" did the same thing.

I wanted to publicly apologize to Carl Forhan, of Songbird Productions. Carl sent me a few messages and e-mail inquiring to the veracity of the article. Carl was one of those who was "on the fence" as to what to believe. I didn't respond to any _direct_ question with regard to the article, to anyone. To any indirect question, I played with words and "helped" their confusion along, letting them make their own conclusions without my denying or admitting the story's veracity. We intended to let the story continue through the weekend. But, back to Carl. Carl is currently developing for the Jaguar. Carl's success likely depends on the choices that Hasbro makes. Our article obviously provided Carl with the hope he was looking for and he would obviously be let down once learning the article was an April Fools joke. For that letdown, we at A-ONE apologize. I had fully intended the same sentiments to the members of 4Play until someone forwarded me Doug Engel's comments on the Jaguar Interactive web site, and I verified them. Some things just never change. Stephanie and Scott, if you care, I apologize. Doug, get your facts straight and stop living in the past.

So, how did you miss the clues? Here they are, straight from the issue and release:

The most obvious was the date of the issue. Sure, we were the day after April 1st, but that was a minor detail. <g>

The headlines teasers:

>Hasbro Minus Jaguar = A-ONE!

That "equation" makes no sense; it states just the opposite of what we were saying. "Jaguar Minus Hasbro = A-ONE" would have been "correct".

>Among the initial titles planned for release by A-ONE Publishers is a
>relatively unknown game developed by Task Masters, Ltd., a modestly staffed
>creative team in Ireland.

Relatively unknown??

>"'Warniverse... The graphics are outstanding and up to 84 players can
>link for head-to-head-to-head action."

I almost edited that to far fewer links, but I let Joe dangle with that one. 84 players?!?!

>"We are pleased to work with A-ONE Publishers and help create a situation
>where faithful Atari owners can continue to enjoy new content for their
>Atari Jaguar video game system, "remarks Mr. Michael Goodrow, Marketing
>Manager of Hasbro. We truly hope this effort inspires those gamers to look
>at other Hasbro products we offer now and in the future."

For Hasbro, highly unlikely. They'd do it themselves. And, "Michael Goodrow" is actually Michael Goodreau. Okay, a very weak clue!

The dead giveaway, in the last words of the article:

>this April Fool's season.

I wonder how many people got this far!

I guess it's too early to start thinking about next year's April Fools...

Dana Jacobson
Publisher
Atari Online News, Etc.
April 6, 1999

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Songbird Productions Announces SFX for the Atari Lynx

April 2, 1999

For Immediate Release:

ROCHESTER, MN -- Songbird Productions is pleased to announce the availability of SFX for the Atari Lynx. SFX is an exciting, new audio tool for the Lynx. Perfect for the hobbyist developer or curious tinkerer, SFX allows the user almost full control over the four audio channels available on the Lynx.

"I am very grateful for the Lynx fans who stuck with me on their pre-orders for SFX last fall," commented Carl Forhan, owner of Songbird Productions and the developer of SFX. "I had no idea that the project would initially be plagued by so many delays, but it's all finally coming together. And now that the kinks are worked out on producing new cartridges, Lynx fans can expect at least two more releases in 1999 from Songbird Productions."

The target ship date for SFX is April 16, 1999, and the retail price is $34.95. If you are interested in ordering SFX, please visit the Songbird Productions web page at http://songbird.atari.org. Dealer inquiries welcome.

To keep up to date with the latest news at Songbird Productions, be sure to visit the company web site at http://songbird.atari.org, or send an email to songbird@atari.org.

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Electronic Arts Ships Populous: The Beginning for the PlayStation

Electronic Arts, the world's largest interactive entertainment software

company, today announced the release of Populous: The Beginning for the PlayStationr. Similar to the critically acclaimed PC version released in November, this real-time strategy game casts the player as The Shaman, a mystical priestess who must use her divine powers to protect and lead her tribe of followers and ultimately become a god.

‘‘Populous finally gives PlayStation gamers the chance to wield the awesome powers of nature," said the game’s producer Simon Harris. ‘‘We’ve completely recreated the incredible 3-D worlds as seen in the PC version of Populous and all of the spells have been redesigned to make best use of PlayStation hardware. However, the gameplay on the PlayStation version is decidedly faster and more action oriented."

Populous lets players feel what it’s like to have god-like control over a world -- enabling them to shape the land, build mythical cities, command armies, convert followers and wield a host of powerful spells. Players can inflict untold damage on unbelievers by calling lightning from the sky, raising lava-spewing volcanoes, conjuring up plagues of insects, bringing forth village-swallowing earthquakes and more.

Developed by UK-based Bullfrog Productions, Populous features a wholly unique 3-D engine that allows players to smoothly scroll and rotate over a true globe, not a flat map as in other strategy games. The powerful engine permits the player to view the action from almost any angle and zoom back-and-forth from a ground level view to a cosmic view of the world as a whole. The revolutionary 3-D technology also brings earth-shattering spells to life with real-time terrain morphing effects. Players will see their volcanoes grow out of the ground, mountains shrink to the size of molehills and entire villages erode into the seas.

Populous is available for the PlayStation at a MSRP of US$39.99. Consumers may purchase the game directly from Electronic Arts by dialing 800-245-4525.

Interplay Sports Baseball 2000 Hits Store Shelves in Time for Opening Day

Interplay Sports, the sports division of Interplay Entertainment Corp.,today announced the shipping of Interplay Sports Baseball 2000 for the Sony PlayStation and Interplay Sports Baseball Edition 2000 for Windows 95/98. These third generation baseball titles have undergone a plethora of improvements from last year and are expected to be among 1999’s elite baseball games.

Complete with play-by-play commentary, dynamic crowds and animated umpires, Interplay Sports Baseball 2000 and Interplay Sports Baseball Edition 2000 bring home the complete baseball experience. Showcasing all 30 major league teams, these titles also feature over 750 major league players, as well as 31 major league stadiums, including Seattle’s new Safeco Field which will be utilized later this season. Interplay Sports Baseball Edition 2000 also incorporates the patented Messiah technology (exclusively licensed from Shiny Entertainment) for greater detailed animations and graphics.

Interplay Sports worked with many professional athletes, including Anaheim Angels’ outfielder, Darin Erstad, during the creation of Interplay Sports Baseball 2000 and Interplay Sports Baseball Edition 2000 to make them as accurate as they are entertaining. Signature batting and pitching motions

were incorporated along with some of the smartest artificial intelligence in the world of sports. The result is life-like players that ‘‘round" bases, hit the proper cutoff men and shift strategically during crucial situations.

‘‘They’re exciting games," stated Erstad. ‘‘From a gamer’s perspective they’re action packed and challenging. And from an athlete’s perspective they’re incredibly realistic. This is serious baseball."

As a side note, a series of preseason simulations were recently run using Interplay Sports Baseball 2000 to predict the 1999 baseball season. American League division winners included Texas, Cleveland and the New York Yankees, with the wild card going to Baltimore. The National League winners consisted of Los Angeles, Houston and Atlanta with the New York Mets securing the wild card. In the 1999 World Series the Atlanta Braves prevailed over the Cleveland Indians four games to two.

Swing Into the Gameplay With Bottom Of The 9th

Konami of America, Inc., leading developer of electronic entertainment for the home video game and PC game markets, is now shipping its newest addition to the Konami Sports Series, the first-ever Bottom Of The 9TH for the Nintendo 64.

Bottom Of The 9TH features improved 3D texture-mapped figures with signature moves of star players and a Bottom of the 9TH’s famous arcade-style batter/pitcher interface. It offers faster gameplay, nine polygon body types, four difficulty levels, 30 beautifully rendered stadiums, multiple camera angles and a real-time "play-by-play" announcer. In addition, the game includes the 1999 preseason roster, incorporating interleague play, and many off-season trades and free agent signings.

"Konami has taken the best features of the 1998 PlayStation release and dramatically improved the overall graphics, speed and sound, taking N64 gameplay to another level with Bottom Of The 9TH ’99," states Tim Dunley, Konami’s Vice President of Marketing. "With the addition this year of texture-mapped players, new motion-captured animations, the exciting play-by-play announcer and the new scenario mode, this title will attract a new set of N64 fans."

The six modes, which include Practice, Exhibition, Season, Scenario, Playoffs and All-star modes, provide a wide variety of game play options. For instance, in the Scenario mode, the user can step into any of 20 famous pressure situations, including the McGwire/Sosa home run record race. The Practice mode allows gamers to hone pitching, fielding, batting and base-running skills. With more than 750 Major League Baseball Players Association players’ career statistics and photos, gamers have the option to test their skills as general manager making their own trades and putting together a dream team that will take them to the Fall Classic.

Konami has signed 1998 AL MVP, Juan Gonzalez, to star on the game packaging and in product advertisements. Juan is an outfielder for the Texas Rangers and a two-time MVP. Gonzalez hit 0.318 with 45 homers, and had the most RBIs in the AL in 49 years. Gonzalez drove in 101 runs by the All-Star break, becoming only the second player to top the century mark going into the All-Star game.

Acclaim Sports’ All-Star Baseball 2000 Ships

Acclaim Sports, a division of Acclaim Entertainment, Inc., a leading worldwide interactive entertainment company, today announced that All-Star Baseball 2000 for the Nintendo 64 has shipped to retailers across the US. Developed by Acclaim Studios’ Iguana Entertainment, All-Star Baseball 2000 is licensed by Major League Baseballr and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) and will also be released for Nintendo Color Game Boy in May 1999.

All-Star Baseball 2000 is supported by a multi-million dollar television, print, radio, on-line, and in-store marketing campaign. The television commercial features All-Star shortstop Derek Jeter, along with the New York Yankees’ interim manager, Don Zimmer, and is running in rotation with three different endings. The television campaign launched on ESPN on March 28 during the historic exhibition game between the Baltimore Orioles and the Cuban National Team.

All-Star Baseball 2000 features second-generation Hi-Rez graphics and realistic player animations unmatched in any baseball title. New features include a special 3-D batting cursor that gives players unprecedented control, variable weather, instant replays, intelligent trading and fantasy draft options, and more than twice as many frames of animation as the game’s predecessor, All-Star Baseball ‘99. All-Star Baseball 2000 features the voices of John Sterling and Michael Kay, play-by-play and color commentators for the New York Yankees.

Other key features of All-Star Baseball 2000 include:

- All 30 Major League teams and over 700 players from the MLBPA
- All 30 Major League stadiums 3-D rendered down to the cut of the grass
- Scouting reports by New York Yankees All-Star shortstop Derek Jeter
- Individual player models feature true-to-life sizes, faces, and team uniforms
- Over 400 new motions include over-the-shoulder catches, breaking up double plays, hook slides, swipe tags, and fist pumping player celebrations
- All-new player graphics include sunglasses, high socks, and alternate team jerseys, plus rain delays and airborne dust
- Over 100 unique batting stances, from the open stance of Andres Gallaraga to Jeff Bagwell’s crowding home plate
- Authentic home run swings from the games’ top sluggers
- Advanced artificial intelligence simulates actual player performance in various game conditions: day vs. night, grass vs. turf, and home vs. away.
- Individual player streaks, slumps, and errors based on real life tendencies

- 1,500 play-by-play and color calls by New York Yankees broadcasters John Sterling and Michael Kay

- Authentic Major League game sounds for home and away games

- On-screen matchup history for every pitcher and batter confrontation

- Customized hot & cold strike zones for each Major League Baseball player

- Future Throw Technology to turn lightning-quick double-plays

- Roster management includes: Multi-player trades; creating, signing and releasing players; and calling up minor league prospects

- Option to play the 1999 Major League Baseball schedule or a special 162-game non inter-league season

- Ability to track season-long player and team stats in over 300 categories by STATS, Inc.

- Four game modes: Exhibition, Season, Playoff, and Home Run Derby

Konami of America Skates Into Big League: NHL Blades of Steel ’99

Konami of America, Inc., leading developer of electronic entertainment for the home video game and PC game markets, announces NHL Blades of Steel ’99, the newest and hardest-hitting addition to the Konami Sports Series for the Nintendo 64 and Game Boy Color. This NHL/NHLPA licensed title brings teeth-smashing realism to hockey fans through motion-captured animations, texture mapped facial features of real players and depictions of signature moves.

Players in NHL Blades of Steel ’99 play on authentic, fully detailed arenas with actual ice conditions, surrounded by true game sound effects, including the voice talents of NHL television announcer and voice of the San Jose Sharks, Randy Hahn. An additional feature, exclusive to N64 players, is the ability to play as the referee.

"Ever since the original Blades of Steel, gamers have been at us to create a Konami hockey game and we’re glad to give them this newest version for 1999," said Tim Dunley, Konami’s Vice President of Marketing. "It’s every bit as good as the original Konami hockey and offers even more in the way of great features for today’s hardest-hitting fans." NHL Blades of Steel ’99 gives gamers the ability to choose a player from an up-to-date ’98-’99 roster, trade players, sign free agents or create a new player of their own. Other key features include full season stat tracking and adjustable team strategies.

Jaromir Jagr, captain and left wing for the Pittsburgh Penguins, will be joining the Konami team this year by lending his endorsement to NHL Blades of Steel ’99. Jagr will be featured on all NHL Blades of Steel marketing materials, including product packaging and print advertisements. Jagr is a four-time NHL All-Star and a two-time league leader in scoring with over 300 goals and 750 points in his eight year career. He is a winner of the Art Ross Trophy and led the Czech Republic to the 1998 Olympic Gold Medal in Nagano.

Actua Ice Hockey 2 Set to be Published

Ice hockey is one of the most popular and passionately followed sports in the world and the action packed high-speed experience has been given the Actua treatment in Actua Ice Hockey 2. Finally a software house does justice to the greatest show on ice.

Using a brand new 3D engine that was co-developed for Actua Soccer 3. The Actua Sports team has created the best ice hockey game available. Sporting motion-captured polygonal characters, every player has been individually texture-mapped to create a work of astonishing realism and depth.

All the motion-capture in the game will be provided by players from Sheffield's own local hockey team, The Sheffield Steelers, past champions in both the B&H cup and the Premier League. The 'Steelers' have also been on hand to assist with the development of the game's cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence. Some of the club's top players have provided their insightful knowledge to help fine tune the defensive and attacking tactics to perfection.

Modes of play will include practice matches, friendlies and cup tournaments as well as the monster Championship which requires a will of iron to succeed. You'll need to punch and play your way through 31 teams made up of over 770 players before any silverware is forthcoming.

Actua Ice Hockey 2 incorporates the fraught, tense and exciting atmosphere that is synonymous with big time hockey. Players will be able to go one-on-one with their opponents in a 'gloves off' fighting sequence that sends the crowds wild. Enjoy hardcore slapshot action with aggressive player contact and bone-crunching board smashing. The aforementioned ultra-violence will be broadcast in a full US TV-style presentation incorporating Ambient RealismTM, the new interactive crowd and commentary system. Combining a studio 'link man' with an in-game replay mode that will analyse each goal-scoring sequence with incredible accuracy, it will be as realistic as watching television.

Mogwai, the current darlings of the Glaswegian underground scene, will be providing the brutal, cutting edge sounds that lend a poetic backdrop to the choice realism on show in Actua Ice Hockey 2.

NBA In The Zone '99 Scores Slam Dunk

Konami of America, Inc., the leading developer of electronic entertainment for the home video game and PC game markets, today announced its next Konami Sports Series title, NBA In The Zone '99, for the Nintendo 64, Sony PlayStation game console and Game Boy Color.

Taking the award-winning gameplay of the best-selling original, NBA In The Zone '99 takes NBA action to the next level. The game features all 29 official NBA teams with more than 300 actual players, and incredible player realism due to motion capture technology with 3D-mapped, polygon graphics. NBA In The Zone '99 includes signature moves of the players and advanced play calling techniques allowing for a true simulation, including:

behind-the-back dribbling, no-look passing, pivoting, fake shots, stealing, blocking and many more. It also is the only game with the 1999 start of season rosters, full-season play and the ability to trade and substitute players.

"Konami is proud to be continuing its winning tradition of creating the best gaming titles. We've taken the best elements of the original NBA In The Zone and added even more features to this awesome new game for PlayStation and N64 fans," said Tim Dunley, Konami's Vice President of Marketing. "Hard core fans and new gamers alike will love the great gameplay, enhanced graphics, more dunks, no limits on trading and the intuitive crowd noise."

Users assume the identity of real NBA players as they engage in a competitive full-season schedule, including the NBA Playoffs and NBA Finals. Enhanced graphics give these virtual players the moves and motions that mimic personalities and personal performance traits of their real-life counterparts. NBA In The Zone '99 gives maximum control to gamers, allowing pin point passing, unlimited trades from all 29 NBA teams and the ability to custom-create their own player. Gamers can also track their own stats throughout a season of play. Authentic NBA stadium sounds are featured, including the voice talents of NBA arena announcer, Ray Clay. Gamers can play a full game or can enter the Three Point Shoot Out and the Slam Dunk Contest, a feature never before seen on the Sony PlayStation game console.

"NBA In The Zone '99 is the latest and most impressive game in the Konami Sports Series line," adds Dunley. "The player realism, the simulation elements, the multiple perspectives from different camera angles, everything has been enhanced to make this a truly realistic gaming experience for basketball fans."

Glen Rice, forward for the Los Angeles Lakers, endorsed last year's NBA In the Zone '98 and will once again be a part of the Konami Sports Series family in 1999. Rice will be featured in all print advertisements, on the package, as well as promotional tie-ins for all platforms.

One Tough Tiger Is Unleashed Onto the PlayStation Game Console as Activision Launches T'ai Fu: Wrath of the Tiger

Kung-Fu action will kick its way into North American retail stores when Activision, Inc. launches T'ai Fu: Wrath of the Tiger on the PlayStation game console the week of April 5, 1999. Created and developed by DreamWorks Interactive, T'ai Fu: Wrath of the Tiger is a 3D character-based fighting adventure which places players in the role of T'ai, a Kung-Fu fighting tiger. Players are challenged to complete a quest though ancient China in which they must master an arsenal of Kung-Fu moves. The game will be available at over 10,000 North American retail outlets and will carry a suggested retail price of $49.95.

Long ago in ancient China, the animal clans were all but destroyed in a head-to-head battle with the power-hungry Dragon Master and his clan. Once again, the Dragon Master has seized power and it is up to T'ai, the lone survivor of the Tiger clan, to defeat the evil dragon and restore peace and balance to the world.

''T'ai Fu adds new depth to the 3D character-based fighting genre with its rich storyline, charismatic hero, and intense gameplay," states Mitch

Lasky, senior vice president of Activision Studios. ‘‘By introducing new fighting moves throughout the game, players are continually rewarded and challenged."

Melding intense fighting with free roaming 3D action-adventure gameplay, T’ai Fu dares players to fight their way through 20 beautifully animated and exotic environments including, sweeping rivers and dense bamboo forests, in a crusade to bring down the Dragon Master. Players take-on a variety of powerful enemies with super-human abilities, including muscle-bound snakes, ferocious boars and lethal leopards, that push their fighting skills to the limit. As they progress through the game, players improve their offensive and defensive martial arts skills and ultimately can use more than 100 killer moves against their opponents including, the Leopard Pounce and Monkey Roll. The game’s fully interactive environments can be strategically used to the players’ advantage -- throw objects to inflict damage upon enemies or hurl them into fires and chasms. Multiple difficulty settings ensure that gamers of all skill levels will be challenged.

Additionally, T’ai Fu boasts DreamWorks’ innovative Morph-X technology which produces real-time lighting and particle effects as well as real-time character and environmental deformation. Cinematic camera angles, recognizable voice talent -- including the voice of Bender in Futurama, John DiMaggio, as T’ai -- and an original soundtrack further enhance the overall gaming experience.

Sony’s Next-Gen Console Sways Consumers

Sony’s PlayStation 2 announcement this month has convinced fence-sitting console fans to close ranks, according to new data from Fairfield Research.

According to a March telephone survey of 1,000 U.S. consumers, only one-quarter of respondents who plan to purchase a next-generation console said they haven’t decided which brand they’ll buy, compared with more than half in December. Increasingly, these game-players are opting for PlayStation 2.

Lincoln, Neb.-based Fairfield Research said 35 percent households with teenagers said they would likely buy a forthcoming console system from Sony, Nintendo of America, or Sega, which last year announced its Dreamcast system.

Of those respondents, 45 percent said they intend to purchase a PlayStation 2, 22 percent favored Nintendo’s next system, and 7 percent said they would buy a Dreamcast system. Twenty-six percent were undecided, compared with 54 percent in December.

"It’s not cast in stone, but it becomes more and more difficult to break the consumer mold the further along in their decision-making process they are," said Gary Gabelhouse, CEO of Fairfield Research. Even more "amazing" is how quickly word of mouth about Sony’s new product has spread.

According to the March survey, designed to represent all U.S. households and adults, 44 percent of all consumers had heard of PlayStation 2. By contrast, awareness of Dreamcast was 10 percent.

"Forty-four percent consumer awareness for what’s basically a

consumer-electronics product is incredible," Gabelhouse said. Most consumer-electronics products generate awareness levels in the teens at launch. And more people had heard of PlayStation 2 than are typically aware of many new cars, he said.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!

April’s Fool Hardy Fools
By Donald A. Thomas. Jr.

It was recently announced that A-ONE publications has acquired the rights to encrypt and publish new Atari Jaguar video game software. The announcement was presented in the form of a press release within their latest issue of their online weekly. It introduced intentions to premiere a game called "Warniverse" by a previously unknown developer troupe based in Ireland.

The Jaguar was once touted by Atari as being the first 64-bit video game system ever released and indeed, it was. The architecture introduced a unique circuit board neighborhood of popular and new RISC processors to accomplish parallel tasks. Just the same, there were multiple 64-bit chips connected to a 64-bit highway. By definition, that fulfilled the minimum requirements of being a truly 64-bit technology. However, the technology only impresses a relatively small faction of dedicated brand loyalists who are predisposed to be impressed. The mass market wants something a bit more. They want game selection, accessibility, excellent customer service or recognized licensed game titles. It can be compared to an automobile purchase. Regardless of how great the engine is, the consumer may prioritize other features such as comfort and ergonomics.

Jaguar ran circles around the competition from a horsepower point of view, but the software and marketing was never enough. Atari had only a small number of well-known titles. Many of those titles took a long time to publish. Some of them were not dramatically enhanced over the versions on less expensive systems. In the area of marketing, Atari invested millions, but the dollars dissolved in a sea of competitive promotions and advertising.

Of some note, one talented group of Jaguar developers called themselves 4Play. Somewhat inspired by Atari’s Star Raiders from years gone by, they shared a vision to create an entire navigational universe. In this universe, multiple pilots can link together and engage in inner-galactic dogfights. The perfect venue for this development, in their view, was the Jaguar game system.

Why on the Jaguar? Probably without total regard for the Jaguar’s impressive specifications, the individual members of the development team were well connected to a sizable membership of Atari users. These users were accessible to forums and roundtables on popular on-line services such as

Genie, Delphi and CompuServe. Like Atari, but on a much smaller scale, 4Play had the talent and were willing to invest the time, but generating a meaningful sum of marketing dollars was not plausible for brilliant software engineers. By networking interest in their product while they were developing it, 4Play managed to build a relatively large fan club. When their game, BattleSphere, was complete, they would have an instant customer base that might impress a publisher or validate whatever small loan they may need to fill the orders and get the game produced.

In 1996 Atari essentially disbanded and turned over all assets to JTS Corporation of San Jose, California. Officially, Atari was still producing the Jaguar and publishing new games, but JTS was a disk drive company and very disinterested in fueling the video game market. In early 1998, after JTS had absorbed all of the financial benefits from Atari that they could, JTS sold Atari's intellectual property and patent rights to Hasbro Interactive for a modest $5,000,000. Hasbro had success updating older video games to newer systems and the Atari library gave them quite a few new opportunities to exploit.

By early 1999, 4Play determined that they finished BattleSphere, but the universe that they attempted to recreate has changed since they started the project in the mid-nineties. JTS is in bankruptcy proceedings, the only sales of Jaguar are on auction Web Sites and by mail order through very specialized retailers. The number of people who originally placed their bid to buy BattleSphere when it became available has dwindled. 4Play promised their following that they would finish what they had started, but Hasbro sees no mass market value in BattleSphere. They are not inspired to license or endorse a relatively dead platform when they have no intentions to support it.

There's a lot of irony in the evolution of this story. A story that appears that will never end. The creators of BattleSphere are resilient individuals. Meanwhile, Hasbro is a behemoth in the industry. A monster of a company that is not moved by whimpering cries from a miniscule niche market that shows up on business analysis graphs as non-existent. In the minds of the 4Play developers, the act of publishing BattleSphere was real. It was a project that absorbed their minds and souls for a very long time. It was a dream that they actually tried to bring to life. For the rest of us who knows BattleSphere, we think it represents the many things that went awry with Jaguar and Atari. It is another tragically missed opportunity.

One might take a satirical approach to the topic and, for a brief moment, imagine what they would do if they had Hasbro's power to breath life back into a system that quite a few people learned to enjoy. One thing someone might do is somehow and in someway negotiate the rights to publish Jaguar software. And if that person did, they might finally reward the patience and hard work of the individuals that call themselves 4Play and publish a game about a War in the Universe: a "Warniverse": BattleSphere.

It was recently announced that A-ONE publications has acquired the rights to encrypt and publish new Atari Jaguar video game software. To believe the story with all of its own clues to the contrary might be foolhardy, but to want to believe is no April's Fool.

A-ONE's April Fools Story - Feedback

The following is a sampling of feedback we found online or received in

e-mail. We've removed all names to protect the gullible, those on the fence, and the flamers. <g>

You son*******! I just finished reading A-ONE this week. You almost had me there, but no way! Your last paragraph confirmed it. Nice try.

You guys bought the Jaguar stuff? Is this for real?

Okay, this has to be a joke, right. Is it?

Awesome guys!!!! Will BattleSphere be the first game released? I've been waiting for BS like forever.

Excuse me, but April 1st was yesterday.

I read this week's issue of AONE and couldn't believe that you made a deal with Hasbro. Great news! When do you think you'll have games coming out? Are you going to re-release the Jaguar? Any chance for the Jaguar 2 coming out? Thanks

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From the Jaguar Interactive web site:

Re: Hasbro - Jaguar = A-ONE?!? Huh?!?

That might be joke
look at the date of the newsletter
4/2/99 a day after aprils fool day

And don't forget this little tidbit from A-ONE...

Yowsa!

A guess this is good news. Good Luck with your Jaguar game.

I realize that, but if it's a joke, it's in extremely poor taste given the long-running fiasco on encryption.

I’m inclined to think it’s not a joke.

I just got word for dana on the delphi message board
that it’s not a joke. so there might be hope for us jaguar players yet.

[Editor’s note: I never denied nor admitted anything at that time! I did, however, mince my words as to confuse!]

I’m stunned. I’m just stunned.

Any idea what this will actually mean for us little people?

Will this make it easier for 4Play to finish Battlesphere and finally have the pleasure of knowing that gamers everywhere are enjoying their work? Will it mean other games will get finished, or even created? Could Jaguar games return to the stores??? Is it just games, or the system itself?

Can’t wait to see what this results in... also can’t wait to get my Lynx!!!

Guys, it’s a couple of days late, but don’t be fooled..Here’s another article [the press release] in the same issue - note the cheap shots at BattleSphere and most importantly, the last paragraph: ....

We’re still in that same old boat with Hasbro - so don’t stop peskering the magazines and Hasbro themselves with Email and ’Snail Mail’...

Is it true or not?

ok for those who have doubts about this whole thing
here is dana’s reply to me on the dephi message board:

>>Second, I’m taking that press release as a Joke about
>>Hasbro and Atari encryption(for one thing, it’s the first
>>time I heard of it,second, since this issue was made the day
>>after april first and finally that there was no date mentioned
>>in the PR (most of the PR’s I’ve seen have a date the press release was
>>offical).made

Apparently, we managed to keep the lid on our dealings with Hasbro. It was not something we wanted public until finalized. And Hasbro had no interest to publicize it as the arrangements weren’t all that newsworthy as far as they were concerned. The day after April 1st? News happens every day. Should it matter? And, as a journalist and public relations person by education, dates on a press release is not critical. The _official_ press release, with more detail, will be forthcoming in the next couple of weeks. The press release we issued in A-ONE was one to make a quick announcement and head off potential rumors (and likely to start others, knowing the Jaguar community!).

>>If it’s not a joke than I appologize for my remarks.
>>otherwise it was another good issue.

Y’mean it was a "bad" issue because of the press release?

A joke? Hmmmm..... You may want to read the issue again to be sure of what you’re suggesting.

-Dana

well what do you think
is it a joke or not.

Well, if it was supposed to be an April Fool’s joke, then THEY SHOULD HAVE DONE IT ON APRIL FOOLS DAY! Trying to pull an April Fools joke any other day of the year, even April 2, is just lame. If they were gonna pull our legs, they should’ve done it on the ONE DAY OF THE YEAR it would’ve mattered. (Speaking of which, anyone hear if that Playstation Supra thing was a joke or not???)

I am a journalist. Most if not all professional press releases, and even a lot of the unprofessional ones, have dates on them. Timeliness is one of the bedrocks of news, meaning a date IS important. Many just say for immediate release. Others are embargoed until a certain time on a certain day.

And issuing false press releases is a good way to make sure no one will take you seriously. Or even give you a second, or even a first look.

If it is true, Wouldn’t Warniverse just be a different name for BattleSphere?
Or, in direct competition with BattleSphere?
I would like to see 84 JAGS linked up though.Fascinating!

World’s Stupidest April Fools Day Stunts

Boy was that ever a lame joke.

It looks like even after 5 years, those boobs at ST-Report are still trying to slam 4Play and it’s members. This is just like the previous times when things calmed down and nobody said anything about anyone and from out of the blue come these attacks from these guys against us.

Don’t they have anything better to do???

P.S. This time I’m sure they offended whatever fanbase they had as well, with that ill-timed bad joke... but I guess that is the kind of joke you have to expect from people born without senses of humor.

I’ll believe it when I’m holding Battle Sphere carts in my hands. Not a second before...

Sorry to sound negative, but why in the hell would Hasbro give the Jaguar

rights over to an online user group/newsletter thant from what I can tell is geared towards Atari ST users?

To be honest, it sounds like more of a SLAM ridiculing the situation than anything else (’WARNIVERSE...?’). I think A-ONE is on their way to my SH*T LIST...

I read the news, and read the reactions. I don’t know how many people want to buy new Atari Jaguar games, but if there was a new title available, I’m sure that everyone would listen. Personally, I would love new titles for the Jaguar. But, is there something new available, anywhere? Thanks.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

New Jersey Man Arrested In Internet Virus Case

A 30-year-old computer programmer has been arrested on charges of creating the ‘‘Melissa" computer virus, which forced some companies to shut down their electronic mail systems this week, authorities said Friday.

New Jersey Attorney General Peter Verniero told a news conference that David Smith of Aberdeen, New Jersey, would be charged with interfering with public communication.

Smith was arrested late Thursday at his brother’s home in Eatontown. He allegedly started the virus from his apartment in nearby Aberdeen.

If convicted, Smith could imprisonment and be fined, authorities said. He was released on $100,000 bail and arraignment was set for Monday.

Several federal and state agencies helped trace the virus to Smith with help from lawyers and technicians for America Online (AOL), Verniero said.

He said Smith allegedly used a stolen AOL account to plant the virus, which causes infected computers to send e-mails automatically to the first 50 addresses in the recipients’ computer address books.

The Melissa virus greeted large numbers of workers as they signed on to their e-mail systems at the start of the work week.

It was often disguised as a message from a friend or colleague and

frequently read: ‘‘Important message from ... ‘‘ When users opened the message, it sent a flood of new e-mails to addresses in the reader’s own computer address book.

The virus disrupted and crashed some e-mail and computer networks for thousands of companies, as well as government agencies by overloading their systems.

The virus used a ‘‘macro," a high-powered automation technology built into most personal computers, to spread itself.

Virus Underground Split By Arrest

The close-knit underground of computer virus creators split into two camps at the news that one of their own may have been arrested for releasing malicious Melissa.

‘‘The whole community has really been shaken up by this," said B.K. Delong, who follows the virus scene. ‘‘The first group is one that wants a better reputation. Then there’s the community that wants to retaliate and come up with even more destructive viruses."

Virus creators gather at the Virus Exchange Underground, a computer chat area where they swap ideas and gossip. Most are programmers interested in viruses and computer bugs. They often write viruses and swap them among themselves, Delong said.

They refer to themselves as ‘‘Black Hats," interested in doing damage, and ‘‘White Hats," often crack programmers looking for possible security hazards. The Black Hats sometimes release viruses through e-mail or Usenet newsgroups.

In a statement released on behalf of the VX Underground, as it’s often called, the group warned the media and investigators not to quickly condemn the author of Melissa.

‘‘Instead they should be more interested in the person who released the bug which caused the spread of the virus," said the statement, which was e-mailed to The Associated Press.

Melissa was originally posted on two sex discussion groups a week ago Friday, according to an online search. The VX Underground said it was highly unlikely those two posts out of thousands could have led to Melissa’s vicious cascade.

‘‘However, once released others posted the Melissa source code to additional newsgroups, Web sites and listservs (mailing lists), which meant anyone could turn it into the virus and continue to spread it," the statement continued.

David L. Smith, 30, of Aberdeen, N.J., was arrested Friday and charged with originating the destructive Melissa, which infected hundreds of thousands of computers and swamped hundreds of companies’ e-mail systems.

Computer experts used unique identification numbers embedded in Microsoft Word documents to trace Melissa back to a well-known virus writer who calls himself VicodinES.

Rita Malley, spokeswoman for the New Jersey state attorney general’s office said Smith was ‘‘definitely not" the person known by that handle. Instead, Smith took two viruses, one of which came from VicodinES, and combined them with another virus to create Melissa, she said.

‘‘They (the Black Hat programmers) are looking for someone to blame," said Delong. They resent the treatment VicodinES supposedly received at the hands of the media, and they’re rallying around their own. They said he is a really nice guy."

’Melissa’ Virus Charges Questioned

The lawyer for the man accused of creating the Melissa computer virus said Tuesday he questions whether the spread of the bug was really a crime.

‘‘The Melissa virus does not corrupt any file, does not erase any files, does not delete any files," Edward F. Borden Jr. said Tuesday. ‘‘All it does is forward a relatively innocuous message to 50 other people.

‘‘I’m concerned about whether the charges are even valid ones. At this point, it remains unclear as to what, if any, damage occurred and what caused it."

Borden wouldn’t say whether his client, David Smith, was responsible for creating the virus. Smith’s previous lawyer, Steven D. Altman, said over the weekend that Smith never intended to do anything wrong.

Smith, 30, was arrested last week and charged with originating the virus, which came disguised as an e-mail marked ‘‘important message" from a friend or colleague. It caused affected computers to fire off 50 more infected messages and slowed some systems to a crawl.

Smith, who is scheduled to appear in court for the first time on Thursday, is charged with interruption of public communications, conspiracy and theft of computer service. He could face up to 40 years in prison.

He is free on $100,000 bail.

Government Suspends Computer Use at Labs

Security concerns and fear of espionage have forced the Energy Department to suspend use of classified computers at three of the nation’s top research labs.

The shutdown affects the Los Alamos National Laboratory, Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, DOE spokesman Chris Kielich said in Washington, D.C.

Energy Secretary Bill Richardson ordered the shutdown as part of ‘‘an overall initiative to improve cybersecurity," Kielich said Monday.

Security checks have escalated at Los Alamos since reports surfaced last year that a lab employee might have committed espionage in the 1980s.

Wen Ho Lee, who was fired from the lab March 8, became the target of an FBI investigation in 1996. Lee, a Tawainese-born American citizen, has not been charged with any crime.

He reportedly was put in charge of updating computer software for nuclear weapons in the spring of 1997, less than a year after the FBI began investigating whether China obtained U.S. secrets during the 1980s that gave it the technology to create miniaturized warheads.

China has denied that it engaged in nuclear espionage.

Last week, the Energy Department said that three of the government's 12 nuclear weapons facilities, including the weapons lab at Los Alamos, received a less than satisfactory security rating for last year.

Los Alamos lab spokesman Jim Danneskiold said the security shutdown could affect 2,000 employees. Lab director John Browne said he will review worker ''self-assessments" and decide if the computers can come back on.

Microsoft To Offer Privacy Tools

Hoping to jump-start a promising new privacy technology, Microsoft and a prominent Internet group will offer a free digital tool kit that one day will allow consumers to restrict what personal information Web sites collect about them.

These new tools, to be announced today, initially will help Internet companies write electronic privacy promises that can automatically be evaluated by a Web browser or other software using a nascent technology called the platform for privacy preferences, or P3P.

Consumers today must manually find a company's privacy statement online, if one exists, and read through legalese to determine what information a Web site might be harvesting, such as their name, e-mail address or even favorite authors or clothing sizes.

Using the new technology, a customer's Internet browser could electronically interpret a company's promises, issuing a warning only if it can't find a statement or if the Web site wants more information than a consumer is willing to disclose.

Despite support from the world's largest software company, hurdles remain and widespread adoption is months, if not years, away.

The technology is mired in a patent dispute and also almost certainly will require tens of millions of people on the Internet to install new browser software.

Microsoft's new tools, for example, are based partly on a relatively new computer code called extensible markup language, or XML, that even the most current versions of some browsers don't yet fully support.

Microsoft and the San Francisco-based Electronic Frontier Foundation planned to make their announcement today at the opening of an important privacy conference in Washington. They will propose changes in a key specification controlled by the World Wide Web Consortium, an Internet

standards group, which would allow online merchants to use their new digital tools.

‘‘The technology they’re announcing probably isn’t the final answer, but it’s a real positive step," said Rick White, former co-chairman of the Congressional Internet Caucus who now practices technology law in Washington state. ‘‘I’m not certain that technology will solve all the problems - there are some gaps you might have to fix in a legislative way."

Both Congress and the Clinton administration have threatened the industry with tough new privacy laws unless companies adequately regulate themselves over ways they collect customer information across the Internet.

The European Union already has passed laws that prohibit the transfer of personal information about its citizens without their consent to any outside country. The White House is negotiating to see how those laws might affect U.S. businesses on the Internet, where international borders are blurred.

‘‘This is going to get a lot of the system up to speed quickly," predicted Tara Lemmey, executive director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

The announcement is the industry’s answer to what it describes as a frustrating chicken-and-egg problem - how to encourage Internet consumers to use the new privacy technology until Web sites begin to offer electronic promises that can be understood by the technology.

‘‘What we’re trying to do here is build a foundation," said Saul Klein, a group program manager at Microsoft. ‘‘We’re not saying that we think this is the answer to self-regulation."

One serious problem for the technology is a legal battle with Seattle-based Intermind Corp., which earlier this year won a patent important to P3P. The company has said it is willing to license the technology for a reasonable price.

‘‘Good software patents are expensive, and we were way ahead of the curve," said Drummond Reed, the company’s chief technology officer.

The Web consortium said the group is ‘‘looking seriously ... at the validity and applicability of this patent."

Microsoft Plans New Consumer Version Of Windows

BMicrosoft Corp. plans to release a new consumer version of Windows next year based on the Windows 95/98 platform, postponing indefinitely a merger of its two desktop operating systems, executives said Wednesday.

The new consumer version of Windows would be available sometime in 2000 and would have improvements including a faster boot-up sequence and better ability to handle digital images, Microsoft President Steve Ballmer said in a speech to developers at a company-sponsored conference in Los Angeles.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates and other executives had said previously that future consumer versions of Windows would be based on its NT technology, a more stable system favored by businesses and other large enterprises.

But Microsoft has struggled to bring out the next generation of the complex NT system, a critical product now known as Windows 2000 and scheduled for release late this year, more than a year behind schedule.

And Microsoft executives at the Windows Hardware Engineering Conference said it was proving more difficult than expected to unify the two platforms in a way that satisfies consumers.

‘‘The broad assumption had been that consumers had a very high interest in the increased reliability of an NT-based product," said Warren Wilson, an analyst for Summit Strategies. But in fact Microsoft polling showed most consumers cared more about maintaining compatibility with older applications which do not always run as well on NT, he said.

Microsoft executives did not identify any specific features planned for inclusion in the as-yet unnamed new version of Windows but said it would be an incremental improvement along the lines of last year’s Windows 98 rather than a breakthrough product like Windows 95, now more than three years old.

Microsoft also plans a minor revision of Windows 98 dubbed Windows 98 Second Edition in the fall which will include the latest version of the Internet Explorer browser as well as support for the latest hardware devices.

Kim Akers, a Microsoft product manager, said the software giant is focusing on making Windows a better platform for games and entertainment and preparing it for home networking as well as improving the online experience and making computers "instantly available" like home appliances.

She said Microsoft’s ultimate goal is still to produce a consumer version of Windows based on the NT code base but gave no timetable for accomplishing that.

‘‘When you actually go out and talk to customers they aren’t necessarily concerned with what the kernel is but are more concerned with whether it works," Akers said.

Rob Enderle, an analyst with Giga Information Group, said Microsoft was stuck with the Windows 95/98 platform indefinitely because game developers rely on access to hardware devices, which is limited in the more secure NT system.

‘‘Until they can fix that problem Windows 9x lives," he said. ‘‘They were way too premature in trying to put the two platforms together and I think they’re beginning to realize that."

Salon Acquires The WELL Community

Cutting-edge online publisher Salon.com and pioneering online community The WELL LLC say their merger Wednesday is that rare business deal that is also a meeting of the minds.

Salon purchased The WELL (Whole Earth ’Lectronic Link) from Rosewood Stone Group, a Marin County venture capital firm. Terms of the acquisition were not disclosed.

The two companies have a closer bond than most parties in an Internet merger. Salon, founded in 1990, was created by subscribers to the WELL community. In fact, the community's new owners planned their business in a private forum on the WELL.

"We were braced for skeptical questions, but the response [from WELL members] has been overwhelmingly positive," said WELL executive director Gail Ann Williams, who will retain her position. "It's a love-fest."

Euphoria aside, both sides say the companies fit together well.

Salon has recently been trying to build up a subscription-only area of its site, which is otherwise supported by advertising. The relatively modest subscription offering includes special content and "premium" community features, such as celebrity chats.

The WELL, for its part, was looking to add appropriate editorial content and features that would be open to non-members.

"It's just like two pieces of a puzzle," Williams said.

Salon assured skeptics that The WELL will remain completely separate from the Salon service, which includes its own community area, Table Talk.

"The principle we're working from is that we are not incorporating The WELL into Salon," said Scott Rosenberg, Salon's vice president of site development. "The WELL has its own brand name, its own culture, its own history, and we value those things. If we didn't we wouldn't have made the acquisition."

The publisher also stressed that the content generated on The WELL by its users will remain sacrosanct, abiding by The WELL's principle that "your words are your own."

Financially, The WELL pays for itself and makes a slight profit, based only on the $10 or $15-a-month subscriptions of about 7000 members.

Founded in April 1985 by Whole Earth Catalog publisher Stewart Brand and technologist Larry Brilliant, The WELL is one of the most illustrious online communities, counting scores of elite technological thinkers, writers and pundits among its members.

As for Salon.com, since its creation in 1995 the publication has built a reputation for thoughtful, in-depth writing, and has built some of the more colorful and intellectual discussion groups to be found online.

Salon.com has been expanding in other areas as well.

Earlier this week the publication took on a new name, dropping the "Magazine" moniker to reflect its interactivity, split its departments into semi-separate sub-sites, and moved from a daily to a continuous story- and news-posting schedule.

'Cybersquatters' Face Crackdown

The company that assigns Internet addresses is reportedly cracking down on ''cybersquatters" - people who register catchy domain names they hope to

resell at a profit.

Network Solutions Inc., which has an exclusive government contract to register Internet addresses, recently purged 18,000 registrations that it suspected were held by speculators, who typically register thousands of names at once, The New York Times reported today.

The company told the newspaper it had the legal right to reclaim most names because the registrants had not paid on time. Network Solutions charges $70 for a two-year registration of a domain name.

‘‘These were well-known speculators that had registered thousands of domain names," Christopher Clough, a spokesman for Network Solutions in Herndon, Va., told the newspaper. He said the company regularly purged delinquent registrations and specifically aimed at domain-name speculators.

In a separate attempt to curb domain-name speculation last month, the company enacted a policy of restricting access to ‘‘root zone" files, which can alert speculators about when a domain name will become available.

Network Solutions said it would no longer make the files freely available, but instead would license them for specific purposes, the Times said. As a result, many businesses that help secure domain-name addresses found themselves unable to do business.

Eric Woodward, president of Myinternet.com, a registration services company, was one of them, the newspaper said. Last month, he discovered that his company suddenly was unable to get access to the root zone files. After he threatened to file a lawsuit, his access was restored, the newspaper said.

Software Maker Sues Online Critics

A software maker is suing seven unidentified people who wrote critical comments about the company on an Internet message board.

Phoenix International Ltd. claims the rumors on the message board operated by Yahoo! Inc. defamed the company and caused its stock price to dip.

The lawsuit was filed March 19 in state circuit court at the Seminole County Courthouse.

Phoenix has issued subpoenas for Yahoo! records, demanding that the company disclose the names of the chat-room participants. Bahram Yusefzadeh, the company’s chairman and chief executive, said Yahoo! was cooperating fully, although the individuals haven’t yet been identified.

Some of the messages, many of which are critical of Yusefzadeh, appear to be employees and former employees, the chairman said Tuesday.

Someone using the moniker ‘‘johnboscarelli" posted messages on Feb. 9 and 16 that said, ‘‘not a single ex-manager from the company is on speaking terms with this Yusefzadeh character" and ‘‘the CEO isn’t too sharp technically, has a huge ego and has a well-earned reputation for dealing dishonestly with his managers and business partners."

During the past 21/2 months, senior company officials have spent ‘‘enormous

amounts of time" defending the company from negative rumors, Yusefzadeh said.

‘‘Some people have put this company under siege for some of the garbage put on this Yahoo! chatboard," he said.

Phoenix makes software for the financial-services industry. Its stock traded this week for nearly $5, down from a 52-week high of $21.68.

Yusefzadeh owns about 1.4 million shares of the company, meaning his stake in Phoenix has dropped in value from $31 million to $7 million during the past year.

Robert V. Bolen, an analyst with J.C. Bradford & Co. in Nashville, Tenn., said the negative chat had damaged the company.

The stock lost one-third of its value on Jan. 13, when the company announced its fourth-quarter earnings would be 9 cents a share, less than half of the 20-cent projection.

But the stock has continued to slide since then, and there has been no other reasonable explanation, Bolen said.

The other defendants go under the monikers ‘‘readbetweenthelines," ‘‘numbersguy-2000," ‘‘PHXX-Loser," ‘‘EmployedThere," ‘‘banker9999" and ‘‘Phoenix-Employee."

Intel Seen Cutting Prices Ahead Of New Chips

Intel Corp. is expected to cut prices from 10 to 20 percent for most of its products next week, including its newest Pentium III chips, ahead of launching some faster processors later in the month.

Analysts said Intel is expected to make its regular price cuts on April 11, as it makes room for new products.

A spokesman for Intel in Santa Clara, Calif. was not immediately available for comment.

Nathan Brookwood, an analyst at Insight64 in Saratoga, Calif., said the price cuts range from 10 percent to 20 percent and include a price cut of the just-launched Pentium III. For example, Intel will cut the price on the 500 megahertz processor to $640 from its launch price of $700.

‘‘The 550 megahertz (Pentium III) will be showing up later in the quarter, so they have to make room for that," Brookwood said. ‘‘The initial move is rearranging the furniture."

He added that Intel is expected to launch a 466 megahertz version of its Celeron chip for low-cost computers and a mobile version of the Celeron chip running at speeds of 333 megahertz. Currently, the fastest Celeron for mobile computers is 300 megahertz.

IBM Launches Fastest 64-bit, 4-way Web Server

IBM Corp. Tuesday introduced the world’s fastest 64-bit, four-way Web server, designed to provide e-business customers and Internet service providers with unparalleled speed, performance and high availability.

The RS/6000 Model H70 addresses the e-business, enterprise resource planning, supply chain planning and business intelligence applications, IBM said in a statement.

U.S. Appeals Internet Porn Ruling

The Justice Department today appealed a judge’s ruling that blocked enforcement of a federal law aimed at preventing minors from gaining access to Internet pornography.

The law, signed into law by President Clinton last year, would require commercial Web sites to collect a credit card number or an access code as proof of age before allowing Internet users to view online material deemed ‘‘harmful to minors."

U.S. District Judge Lowell Reed barred its enforcement Feb. 1 after civil rights activists claimed it violates free speech guarantees and unfairly prosecutes gays, AIDS activists and others.

‘‘The government is going to have an uphill battle in convincing the court of appeals that this law complies with the First Amendment," said David Sobel, general counsel for the Electronic Privacy Information Center.

The Justice Department, which appealed to the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals, argued the law would act as a ‘‘brown paper wrapper" protecting children from pornographic Web sites.

The Child Online Protection Act is the second major effort by Congress to protect children from Internet pornography after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Communications Decency Act of 1996, which would have applied to both commercial and noncommercial Web sites.

The new law calls for maximum criminal penalties of six months in jail and $50,000 in fines, and additional fines for repeat violators.

Computer Recycling Program in Massachusetts

Tired of keeping up on the information superhighway? Not to worry, old computers may soon be part of the highway - as pothole filler.

The state Department of Environmental Protection has joined forces with the American Plastics Council to promote the recycling and marketing of plastics from electronics.

‘‘We want people to take those computers out of the attics, get them out of the landfills and make use of the good parts," said Rick Lombardi, spokesman for the department. ‘‘And God knows, we have plenty of potholes to fill in New England."

A lightweight, asphalt-type mix can be made with the plastic portions of computers, along with such equipment as printers, paper trays and scanners.

A pothole filler has been developed by Conigliaro Industries Inc. of Framingham, which processes up to 12.5 tons of computer and other plastic housings from across the Northeast every day.

Starting Sept. 1, Massachusetts residents will be prohibited from dumping computers and cathode-ray tubes - which are contained in TVs - in landfills.

The department estimated Tuesday that more then 1 million computers and televisions - which account for an increasing amount of the state's waste - will become obsolete in the next few years.

Discarded electronics account for 75,000 tons per year of solid waste in Massachusetts, the department said. By 2006, the volume of waste generated is expected to be 300,000 tons per year.

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